

CALL FOR PAPERS

CONFERENCE ON THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABILITY AS AN EVOLVING AND JUSTICIABLE CONCEPT

Human Rights and Sustainable Development Research Group

9-10 June 2022, Kjerka, Domus Media, University of Oslo (*hybrid event*)

Conference theme:

The links between human rights and sustainability lend credence to the idea that the concept of sustainability is evolving. The term sustainability has changed conceptually since its origins in the “conservation and preservation movements of the nineteenth century and the environmental movement of the twentieth century” (Thiele, 2013). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015), building on environmental sustainability, the economic and social development agenda, and human rights (Sjåfjell & Ahlström, 2020), paved the way for the triple focus of sustainability on "people, planet and prosperity". Today, sustainability it is often used as a strategy to face the biggest challenges of our time, including environmental degradation, climate change, covid, poverty and inequality, and the impact of business on human rights.

Yet the evolution of the concept of sustainability continues. In theory, proponents of sustainability recognize that "[t]he so-called three pillars of sustainable development are hierarchically equal" (Bantekas & Oette, 2020), and agree on its link to resource management to avoid depletion for future generations. However, the content and focus vary on how and where it is applied. While some actors use sustainability to denote a "business-as-usual" approach to sustained growth, others emphasize the social and human rights dimensions. Yet others use the inherent limitations of the planet's carrying capacity as the framework for operationalizing sustainability.

This conference will explore the intersection of human rights and sustainability, and how the two agendas meet. It focuses on the impact of human rights on sustainability discourses, including how it interacts with the SDGs, national planning for sustainability, and the place of sustainability in human rights litigation. In relation to litigation, sustainability and sustainable development have been referred to directly or implicitly by different courts and dispute settlement bodies, including in the context of human rights protection. Here we can think, for example, of the United Nations Human Rights Committee in *Lubicon Lake Band v. Canada*, the *Yanomani Indians and Ogoniland* cases



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of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, respectively, and the recent Fosen case in Norway.

This conference aims to develop critical and reflective thinking on sustainability and its linkages to human rights, relating to its evolution, implementation, justiciability, and the political power dynamics of different actors (including in civic spaces).

We are inviting proposals that align with the theme. Topics may relate to or be analyzed from various academic fields, including but not limited to law, institutional, comparative, political and policy analyses, and multidisciplinary is encouraged.

Abstracts are invited on one or a combination of the two subthemes:

(1) Sustainability as an evolving concept:

- How has the concept of sustainability evolved, and what are the linkages and role of human rights in this regard?
- Are there, and what could potentially be, new emerging ways of thinking about sustainability and human rights?
- Who determines how sustainability is understood (power dynamics)?
- What approaches and relevance is there to civic space issues (for local communities and rights defenders) regarding SDGs and/or sustainability?
- What role do national institutions like NHRIs play in participation and setting the agenda on issues relevant to sustainability?
- How does national-level reporting of SDG implementation take account of human rights, and what understandings of sustainability are advanced in the process?

(2) Sustainability as a justiciable concept:

- Does sustainability lend itself to being a justiciable concept, and what does a human rights perspective add in this regard?
- How have litigants used sustainability and sustainable development in litigation strategies in human rights, environmental, or other cases?
- How can the SDGs be made justiciable and what is their role in adjudicating sustainability? For example, SDG 16 concerned with peace, justice and strong institutions.
- How have different courts/judicial bodies understood and applied the concept of sustainability, explicitly or implicitly, and what kinds of remedies are associated with it?
- What approaches, frameworks, etc., do courts use in balancing the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability?

- To what extent and how successfully have different courts taken up the adjudication of corporate sustainability and business and human rights?
- What are the different roles of national and international courts in adjudicating sustainability?

Submission of abstracts and selection of participants

The title of your paper and an abstract of a maximum of 500 words should be submitted to by filling in the abstract submission form: <https://nettskjema.no/a/253808> by **25 March 2022 (end of day CET)**. Successful participants will be notified by **5 April 2022**. The selection of participants will be based on the quality and thematic fit of the submitted abstract with the conference theme.

Submission of short working papers is expected by **25 May 2022 (end of day CET)** to enable all conference participants and discussants to read the papers in preparation of the conference. The word limit for the short working papers is 3,000 – 5,000 words. The conference will take place on **9-10 June 2022**.

Publication

A peer-reviewed joint publication of selected conference papers is envisaged. Participants how wish to submit revised papers for the publication will be given time to develop their individual papers after the conference, based on the comments from and discussion with the other participants. The limit for the full-length papers is 8,000 words including footnotes. Submission of full-length papers is expected by **30 October 2022**.

Only original research, which is not submitted for publication elsewhere, will be considered for publication.